

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2849

INFO USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2859

USIA PASS IWE GAWRONSKI

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PO

SUBJ: MINISTER OF LABOR COMMENTS ON U.S. VISIT

1. MINISTER OF LABOR COSTA MARTINS RETURNED TO LISBON MAY 20 FOLLOWING EIGHT-DAY INVITATIONAL TRAVEL TO U.S. IN STATEMENT TO PRESS MINISTER INDICATED THAT TRIP WAS "POSITIVE FACTOR" AND THAT THE UNITED STATES IS DISPOSED TO ASSIST PORTUGAL WITH SUBSTANTIAL AID. MINISTER SAID THAT U.S. WILL NOT INTERFERE IN PORTUGUESE AFFAIRS AND WILL OPPOSE ANY ATTEMPT TO DISRUPT THE PORTUGUESE ECONOMY.

2. AS PER USUAL CUSTOM, LEFTIST LOCAL PRESS ASKED LEADING QUESTION IMPLYING THAT U.S. IS ALREADY BOYCOTTING PORTUGUESE PRODUCTS AND U.S.-BASED MULTINATIONAL FIRMS ARE DISMISSING PORTUGUESE EMPLOYEES. MINISTER QUESTIONED ACCURACY OF THESE ASSUMPTIONS, SOMETHING RARELY DONE IN PORTUGAL TODAY. MINISTER INDICATED THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED EXPORT OF PORTUGUESE PRODUCTS TO THE U.S. AND WAS CONFIDENT MARKETS WOULD BE FOUND.

3. WITH REGARD TO UNEMPLOYMENT, HE RECOGNIZED THAT DISMISSALS WERE A PROBLEM BUT SAID THESE WERE RESULT OF TWO FACTORS, THE WORLD-WIDE RECESSION AND CONCERN BY SOME FIRMS OVER EVENTS IN
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PORTUGAL. SAID THAT SOME FIRMS LOCATED IN PORTUGAL BECAUSE OF

ITS EXCESSIVELY CHEAP LABOR, BUT OTHERS HAVE MADE INVESTMENTS WITH THE INTENTION OF REMAINING IN PORTUGAL AND PAYING HIGHER WAGES. "FOR US AT THIS TIME IT IS GOOD THAT THESE FIRMS CONTINUE TO WORK IN PORTUGAL IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY."

4. MEDIA TREATMENT OF MINISTER'S ARRIVAL MORE LOW-KEY THAN USUAL.

5. COMMENT: COSTA MARTINS IS EXTREMELY IMAGE-CONSCIOUS AND HE HAD PUSHED VERY HARD FOR MEETING WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER. IF HE FELT SLIGHTED IN ANY WAY HE HAD NO HINT OF THIS AT PRESS CONFERENCE. GIVEN THE DELICACY OF HIS POSITION AND HOSTILE ATTITUDE OF PRESS WE BELIEVE MINISTER'S STATEMENTS WERE EXTREMELY POSITIVE AND THAT TRIP WAS HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL.
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